Workers for God

Annual Address delivered at the Long Island District Conference of the New York Annual Conference of the

A. M. E. CHURCH

AUGUST 25th, 1915

By

Rev. J. Josiah Walters

Presiding Elder

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REV. J. JOSIAH WALTERS

Preamble

Since listening to the very able address of our Presiding Elder, J. J. Walters, charmed by such beautiful diction, captivated by such lofty thoughts,stirred to my soul's depths by such eloquence, and enraptured by such grand poetic beauty, I have been made to feel that this most excellent address ought to go to the church and race in printed form. The thoughts expressed are burning thoughts which our people should read, particularly the young. The diction is superb; rhetoric and logic connecting every paragraph, and embellishing each sentence, until the whole theme sparkles with gems of beauty. Then, too, the sublime poem. This alone has given inspiration to the discouraged, hope to the despondent, and lifted the heart, in spite of ourselves, up to "Pisgah's top" where one may sight the reward promised the humble co-laborer with God. The whole address has given us a broader and a clearer vision of the 'Beyond'; and the church and the race need it for inspiration and help in their "battle for truth and righteousness." My motive, therefore, for offering the resolution is, that others, as well as ourselves, might be benefitted by the production.

Aug. 25th, 1915.

J. M. PROCTOR.

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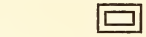
Preface

Delivered at the Long Island District Conference of the New York Annual Conference of the A. M. E.Church, on the 25th of August, 1915, at Bethel church, Westbury, the Annual Address which forms the embodiment of the following article, was received with feelings of christian appreciation. At the close of its delivery, the Presiding Elder having signified that the deposition was in order for discussion, Rev. Proctor, followed by Revds. Wilson and S. H. V. Gumbs, made pertinent, salutary, and commendatory remarks thereon; and at the conclusion, the former made a motion which was unhesitatingly seconded, received, and unanimously carried. The motion, substantially, was: That the address be printed in pamphlet form, and be circulated within and without the bounds of the District. Though possessing the natal endowment of modesty, I was humbly constrained to rend the circumference of same with impunity, and to acquiesce with the heartfelt desires of my Brethren. And, in doing so, I do now breathe a fervent prayer, that the Master, whose glory and honor lie supremely in my breast, may so bless the humble production that same be auxiliary in bringing honor and glory to His Holy Name.

THE AUTHOR.

Workers for God.



Brethren and Friends:

Man, primarily, is dependent on God, and, secondarily, both dependent and interdependent on his fellowman. This assertion is easy, and, consequently, far from being strained. In whatever relation it is legitimately viewed, labor, or activity, couples man with his fellowman, and to his Creator. Every definite action is conditioned by a definite resistance, without which, the former is impossible. Again, work, and the Creation of God are coeval. This gives, therefore, a prima facie clue to the preceding observations. And although it may not be strictly correct to use the term work in connection with the achievements of the Deity, yet, speaking after the manner of men, we are forced to concur with him who said, "The firmament sheweth his handy work." For, as we carefully observe the environments of man, as we recall the divine commands and requisitions, we cannot be long in arriving at the conclusion that man is intended to be an executive being---a worker adapted to execute his own plans, as well as those entrusted him by his Maker. And when both are performed with an eye single to God's glory, each worker cannot but arrive at that plane of joy whereat Paul arrived, and whereon he stood, exclaiming: "We are laborers together with God."

Taking advantage of his adaptability to labor, man incessantly fulfills his mission, and glories therein. But it is regretful to observe the many who fail to realize the object of their creation; and failing, they labor only for self and sublunary satisfaction.

Of this class of workers it is not my purpose to speak. There is another which demands serious attention as time hastens and eternity approaches. This class stands paramount, and is composed of a variety of laborers. It is pleasing to observe that in this variety, there exists a grand unity;---a unity perceived, or unperceived—a unity heeded, or unheeded. And in this unity there is a great variety, whether observed or unobserved. Consequently, this co-ordination of things bespeaks a divinely established means to a divinely-conceived end, thereby presenting to mortals a telling masterpiece of Divine wisdom. From the obligations of this class, the press, the desk, the counter, and similar agencies are not immune. Provided always, however, that the honor and glory of God, and the well-being of man, are not relegated to a secondary position. It is necessary that this variety should be so co-existent. Creation enforces the fact. Past achievements for God confirm it. Present successes say, "Amen" to it. And though various the gifts of the workers, though various their graces, though various their spheres of activity, though various their failures and successes, yet the combination of the variety does not nullify the essence of the all-pervading unity which characterizes the work of the Creator. For, workers for God possess certain characteristics by which they are divinely recognized, and whereby they are kept intact, however, remotely they may be separated, the one from the other. Because they are one with Christ, they have one mind for His glory. Were this not the case, when obstacles arise, when disciplinary failures intervene, when the work demands their putting forth their all, and their embracing of unwelcome self-denials, they would lay their armor down, and take a dangerous and premature rest. But instead of this, that divine impulse nerves them for the task: and,

their motive being one, they are rendered qualified to hear always the encouraging consolation: "My grace is sufficient for thee." One their mind, one their motive, one their desire, one their purpose, workers for God dare to obey, dare to suffer, dare to lose, and even dare to die, so that thereby, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy Will be done on earth" may, by their conjoint labor for God, be speedily realized in all its plenitude. Contrary characteristics cannot but impede the blessed work, and keep in abeyance the desired success. Hence, this bugle of caution, sounded years ago, should be attended to in our day, as it peals forth the thrilling sound: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Labor for God is fraught with certain peculiarities, and should it be divested of same, the results would be sadly regretful. Hence it is a dire necessity that God's workmen should be equipped with certain indispensable qualifications. They must have a sterling knowledge of Him to whom the work belongs. Lacking this, many workers have failed over and again. Not that this peculiar failure implies the lack of perceptible and profitable issues, but because said issues did not culminate in the personal and supreme benefit of said workers. These labor for worldly fame, pecuniary advantages, and for the praise of men. And by so doing, they are unmindful that each worker must divest himself of self, put on Christ, be robed with humility, regard himself an instrument, purely and simply, be willing always to be secondary and subservient, and that his Master be primary and paramount.

Paul "magnified" his office. Not only because he was a preacher of righteousness, but for the reason that he was what the term involves, and that

which it designates in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and heighth, i. e. "Worker for God."

Moreover, all workers for God should have a superlative estimate of the work engaged in. Be it great or small; because it is for His glory, He countenances all alike. Patience, perseverance, and hope, should not be regarded insignificant factors. Entertaining, and maintaining the last, the Christian worker opens an avenue whereinto the foregoing requisites travel; and travelling, they serve as healthful auxiliaries, heralding successes from afar, and ultimately, luring same to prostrate themselves at the feet of the confiding and energetic worker. This success, as has been repeatedly proved, is the outcome of love for God, and love for humanity. This requisite love, is the crowning incentive to earnest workers. It cannot be successfully dispensed with. The forementioned are essential, but subservient. This, supreme. By it, the great Model was actuated when on earth working "the works of Him that sent Him." Workers for His glory would do well to imitate Him evermore. And using this heavenly lever for the uplift of their fellowman, they will, day by day, demonstrate to worldly spectators that their love for the creature is but a happy corollary of their love for the creature's God.

This being the case, the result of faithful working, "other things being equal," is an unqualified remuneration. Albeit, it is well to remember that reward should not be the parent. Rather it should be the offspring. It is true that "reward sweetens labor." But it is equally true that there is an amazing difference between the earthly and the heavenly reward. That is often dangerous, and, undoubtedly, evanescent. This, safe, and eternal. And though the latter cannot be lost sight of while the Christian laborer

toils; yet he will ever be constrained to duty by virtue of the love he possesses for his Master, and not so much by the expectancy of present and future remunerations. For the child who performs his filial duties, through love for his loving parents, is the one preferred, and praised above the other who does the parents' bidding in view of the promised reward. The former executes the parental commands through filial love. The latter does so through selfish and self-ful love.

Already, in time, faithful labor has its compensations. For he who labors competently, according to the forementioned requisites, gains joy in the Lord, and possesses a blissful consciousness of loyalty to Him. Nor are these all. He, furthermore, lives the life of sublime expectancy, being assured that the necessary preludes pave the pathway to eternal conpensations, which, briefly summed up are: beatific Nearness to Christ, Participation in the program of Glory land; unsullied and unending Happiness, and Perfection in all its totality. These, and more than these, are the high grade compensations which mortal eyes now cannot see, and which, at the outflow of time; and the inflow of that blissful eternity, shall be vouchsafed to all the faithful workers of King Emanuel. Then shall be supremely verified the oft-repeated words: "Rest, Home, Sweet Home."

And what is that "Sweet Home?"

'Tis Heaven the Dwelling Place of God.

I

THERE is a place whose description baffles mortal powers;
It is a place far removed from all here below.
Imagination attempts description admidst its peering hours
Only leaving its votaries thirsting more and the more to know.
What may it be that carries the thoughts above?
What can it be that lures them to that road?
What is the spell whereby, as Christians rove?
They think, and long, and pray, for that abode?
It is a thought insistent, and a spell persistent:
They wean from earth's delusion, and all sins' intrusion,
Earth is a while forgot, with all its sorry lot.
What may it be, what can it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling Place of God.

II.

THERE is a place whose pleasure ne'er hath been impaired
Since intrusion unhallowed from its domains was hurled.
Contemplation's sacred glow hath ventured oft and cheered;
But the reality sublime it ne'er to mortals hath unfurled.
What can it be that raises the thoughts above?
What may it be that fosters the longings within?
What is the spell whereby, as Christians love,
They long for exit from this world of sin?
It is the thought supernal, and a spell internal:
They wean from earth's attractions and sin's grave infractions;
Earth is a while suppressed, and all that hath distressed.
What may it be, what can it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

III.

THERE is a place whose hallowed atmosphere can never tire
The countless myriads as they do their Lord's behest.
'Tis to that sphere the soul aspires higher and higher,
With longings often pungent, with desire to be a guest.
What may it be that lures the thoughts above?
What can it be that brightens hope's lit ray?
What is the spell whereby, like Noah's dove,
The soul goes out to the land of restful day?
It is a thought that brightens, and a spell that heightens:
They wean from earth's confusion, and sin's dire contusion;
Earth is a while unkown, and all that makes us moan.
What can it be, what may it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

IV.

THERE is a place whose friendship feeds on love divine;
It is a friendship this sad world in part hath known.
'Tis of that kind that Jonathan and David did entwine;
And yet that love which fosters hingeth on God's throne.
What can it be that bids the soul "Come Home"?
What may it be that makes earth incomplete?
What is the cause beneath the aerial dome
That makes the Pilgrim long with his dear Lord to meet?
It is a thought endearing, and a hope that's cheering:
They wean from earth's deception; they crave that grand reception;
Earth is a while encased, and all that hath disgraced.
What may it be, what can it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

V.

THERE is a place whose occupants are one in heart;
Their actuating motives daily blend in sweet accord.
'Tis of that kind of which the world's Redeemer bore His part
And makes His ransom'd followers hail Him still their Lord.
What may it be that whispers to the soul good cheer?
What can it be that buoys the Pilgrim on his way?
What is the cause that dissipates each gloomy fear
As homeward bound the weary Traveller plods each day?
It is a thought most holy, impelling all the lowly
Who, followers of the Nazarene, have joys untold foreseen
As hastens that glad day, when tears shall roll away.
What can it be, what may it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

VI.

THERE is a place whose lustre sparkles more and more:
It is a place unlike these gloomy scenes of time:
It is a port whose rays the storm-tossed ones allure;
It is a nightless haven;—her brilliants all sublime.
What can it be? O grand constraining force!
What may it be? O magnetizing spell!
What is the cause that makes true faith rehearse,
And antedates the joys 'mongst which at last she'll dwell?
It is thought benignant, that makes all hell indignant.
And as the port advances, it heavenly joys enhances,
To Pilgrims daily pressing, to enjoy consummate blessing.
What may it be, what can it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

VII.

THERE is a place, thank God, a place tho' now unseen,
Yet 'tis a place wherein poor, Ransom'd Soul "shall reign:"
'Tis of enduring beauty, a land of "living green",
A place where Ransom'd hosts shall swell that glorious strain.
What may it be? O captivating power!
What can it be? O fascinating boon!
What is the cause whereby the soul doth tower
And read earth's morning hours as though 'tis noon?
It is thought conclusive, debarring things delusive
As onward comes the dawning, of that illustrious morning.
There is a place somewhere,—'tis sinless, happy, dear,
What can it be, what may it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

VIII.

THERE is a place where God's elect shall part no more;
It is a place bereft of earth's "Goodbye,"—
A place wherein God's "jewels" shall adore
Their "Daysman" pleading now for them on high.
What can it be? O soul-entrancing thought!
What may it be? O joy-enchancing spell!
What is the cause whereby the soul is brought
To long for that away from which man fell?
It is a thought inspiring, lost Eden's bliss desiring,—
A sacred spell awaiting man's glorious reinstating.
There is a place somewhere.—a place beyond compare.
What may it be, what can it be?
'Tis Heaven, the Dwelling-place of God.

By Rev. J. Josiah Walters, Aug. 1915.

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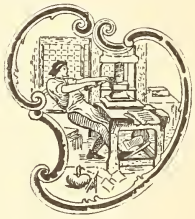

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